

A SUMMARY APPRAISAL OF THE GUERRILLA SITUATION IN CHINA

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Guerrillas and potential guerrilla groups in China fall roughly into five categories: (1) ex-Nationalist soldiers, who dispersed in the wake of the Communist armies, some of whom profess allegiance, and some of whom owe no allegiance to the Nationalists; (2) bandits, who constitute a perennial lawless element in China; (3) peasants, who are driven by poverty or dissatisfaction with the regime to conduct guerrilla-type operations; (4) members of secret societies, which have traditionally participated in the overthrow of governments in China; and (5) members of anti-Communist religious groups, particularly the Moslems of the northwest.

Evidence from various areas in China supports two conclusions with respect to the guerrilla situation: (1) Until mid-1950 guerrillas constituted a problem of the first magnitude for the Pei-p'ing regime; and (2) Communist claims of considerable success in suppressing the guerrillas during 1950 and early 1951 appear to be largely substantiated.

By their own admission, guerrilla activities presented Chinese Communist leaders with a major problem during the first year of the Pei-p'ing regime. Although no firm figures exist for guerrilla forces in mid-1950, Pei-p'ing has provided a number of indications of their magnitude, including the admission by Chairman Mao Tse-tung in June 1950, that there were over 400 thousand bandits still to be annihilated.

Szechwanese prisoners of war, recently interrogated in Korea, report that guerrilla activities were widespread throughout their province before the "liberation" and during its early period. Among the major activities engaged in by the guerrillas were smuggling, particularly opium, and disruption of transportation accomplished more or less at will. For a time after the liberation guerrillas were able to impede the consolidation of Communist control in Szechwan by killing Communist officials and robbing government granaries. In Kwangsi, and other traditionally bandit ridden areas, much the same situation obtained. Ex-guerrilla leaders report that guerrillas were able to roam practically at will throughout large areas of Kwangsi. They maintained themselves either by taxing the village people or by robbing government granaries. In central Kwangsi, in July and August of 1950, dissident leaders were able to arouse the countryside successfully to rise against the Communist grain tax collectors and force the confinement of Communist cadres to the cities. The guerrillas were able to attack supply trains moving both by rail and road; Liu Po-ch'en in a report stated that in Southwest China alone over 2 thousand working personnel had been slaughtered by "bandits."

Since mid-1950, however, Communist authorities have engaged in a vigorous bandit suppression campaign, which has achieved conspicuous success in liquidating guerrillas or frustrating their activities.

In the two provinces of Szechwan and Kwangsi, on which information pertaining to guerrilla activities is most abundant, bandit suppression has followed a very definite pattern. In Szechwan, Communist efforts at control began in the spring of 1950, and by December 1950 the province was relatively quiescent. The campaign in Kwangsi began in October 1950,

and by the summer of 1951 there were only a few scattered pockets left. Ex-guerrilla leaders from central Kwangsi reported that beginning in October 1950, the Communist troops employed tactics known as the "great encirclement," in which the guerrilla forces were surrounded and forced either to starve or fight their way out at the cost of heavy casualties. In other parts of Kwangsi and in Szechwan guerrillas have been driven into remote areas where they cannot recruit new members and where they can barely maintain themselves. After the guerrilla strength had been broken in an area and the people were no longer shielded from the direct impact of Communist power, farmers' associations and militia were formed to control the countryside.

While equally detailed information is not available for other guerrilla areas, the success of the Communists in these two "most heavily infested bandit areas" strongly suggests the general success of the program. There are fairly well substantiated reports from Sinkiang of the capture and execution of the leading guerrilla leaders, Osman Bator and Janishkan and the escape of Tolbars with the subsequent dispersal of their forces. From available reports indications are that the Communists have driven Yunnan guerrillas into the western part of the province. In this area, in addition to guerrillas of unknown or no political affiliation, there are also remnant Nationalist troops who have shifted to and fire across the Yunnan-Burma border. These troops are believed to maintain a tenuous contact with authorities on Taiwan.

The lack of reports of active bandit suppression activities or guerrilla activity in areas north of the Yangtze would seem to indicate that there, too, suppression campaigns have been successful. The success of P'ai-p'ing's suppression campaigns to date is best summed up in the admission of General Cheng Kai-min, Nationalist leader in charge of mainland guerrilla activities, to the effect that the "link-up network between the mainland guerrillas and Taipei had so completely broken down as to be virtually useless."

Reports from the guerrilla leaders themselves would indicate that, all told, there has been a decline of at least 50 percent in guerrilla forces. The Communists have made very substantial claims of bandit annihilation and, allowing for the usual exaggeration, there seems reason to accept their general claims. Although the number of guerrillas remaining in China is possibly still in the hundreds of thousands, because of the organization of anti-Communist forces, interdiction from villages, and problems of food and ammunition supplies, they can no longer be considered a serious menace to the regime. It is probable that, except in local cases, there will be no significant opposition to grain collections in 1951 nor will there be any serious interruptions to the supply lines. However, since the basic cause of banditry, such as poverty and dissatisfaction with the government, have not been eliminated the Communists will continue to be confronted with the problems and, in order to cope with the problem, will be compelled to maintain effective local military forces and effective local political organization.